THE CAYAPA INDIANS*

by

Max Heimann

In the far north west of the Ecuadorian Republic there is a river named the Santiago. Near the village of Borbon it is joined by one of its tributaries, the Cayapa River. The Cayapa Indians, a harmless tribe consisting of no more than 2500 persons, live on the upper reaches of the Cayapa River and around its sources.

I have never been able to understand why they are called "uncivilized" and "savage." Would it be because they dress more simply, more comfortably, more suitably and cheaply than we European fashion slaves? Or would it be because they speak their own language, unknown to us, and because they do not know how to read and write and do not stuff their heads with the dead weight taught in schools and called "education"? Or even, would it be because they have other customs and manners as well as different moral concepts?

One thing is certain—the Cayapa are happy people, because they are more satisfied with their lot than we Europeans, who are so demanding and feel so superior with our conceit in our sham civilization, in the clothes prescribed for us by the tyrants of "fashion" and in the "wisdom" acquired in schools.

They frequently come to town in small groups of five to 20 persons. I have seen them many hundreds of times, but again and again I am delighted when I meet these small, but well-built and sturdy [282] figures. The men are not taller than 150-160 cm. (Translator--5 ft. to 5ft. 4 in.), while the women are barely 140 cm. (Translator--4 ft. 8 in.). Their skin is copper brown in color.

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* The author a business man, lived in Tumaco (southwest Colombia) for 35 years (1895-1930) and was German Vice-Consul for the Departamento Nariño from 1907 to 1920. Although he never actually visited Cayapa villages, he did have occasions to see and question groups of them "many hundreds of times," on their frequent visits to Tumaco. Apart from this, several of his employees have been in Cayapa villages and have given him reports. (K. Th. Preuss).

305 might hear a piano or phonograph music from somewhere. That they still must quickly take a look at. The entire crowd rushes busily into the house concerned and up the stairs. Their curiosity is soon satisfied and they come down again and now they must be off quickly so as to be able to make use of the tide current. Their
501 unpainted canoes are 8 to 10 meters (Translator--about 8 to 10 yds.) in length and from 70 to 90 centimeters (Translator--2 1/3 to 3 ft.) in width. They are slim and pleasing in shape and have
[531] black colored decorations around the edges. Each one of them accommodates from 5 to 8 persons, close together, with their meager belongings. They paddle along nimbly with their leaf-shaped oars and, while their canoes glide along silently and swiftly, the entire crowd has soon disappeared in the mouth of the
184 Mira River. It will take them two days to reach their hometowns.
648 During the journey they camp in the open over night, somewhere along the shore, in an empty pasture. But they have to be careful. Occasionally they are attacked and robbed there by Negroes, and if they resist, they are murdered in cold blood. Only recently a whole group of them, men, women and children, 14 persons altogether, were most cruelly murdered on the Mira River by some bestial Negroes.

101 [285] However, our friends will now have arrived home safe
342 and sound on the upper Cayapa River. They are greeted from afar
361 by the friendly smoke of their own hearths. Their villages con-
824 sist of a few, widely dispersed bamboo huts of a most primitive type. A few uncut tree trunks have simply been rammed into the earth in a rectangle. The floor is at a height of 3 to 4 meters (Translator--ca. 3 to 4 yds.) and is made of split bamboo. Above this, at an equal distance, is the roof made of coconut (?) palm (Steinnusspalme) leaves. That is the entire structure. Since these houses have no walls, it is obivous that doors and windows are not
417 required either. The trunk of the Ceiba trees, light as a cork,
824 into which a few steps are hewn, serves as stairs. (The Ceiba tree
512 produces the silk-like balsa wool, called "Kapok" on the European market.) These stairs are obliquely leaned on, without being fastened anywhere. A hen-roost can be climbed more easily than one of these Cayapa ladders. In order to be somewhat safe from surprises by unwanted visitors, the ladders are drawn up to the living quarters overnight, and when a family goes on a trip, the ladder is thrown into the river and left to float away. After
322 all it is so simple and easy to fetch another Ceiba trunk from the nearby forest on returning and quickly hack a few step-like cuts into it with a chopping knife.

2: Murra E-4 (no date) 1943 SD6 Cayapa SD6

THE CAYAPA AND COLORADO

By JOHN MURRA

INTRODUCTION

The *Cayapa* and the *Colorado* are the last surviving Indian groups in the lush western lowlands of Ecuador (maps 1 and 6). Once an area of extensive Indian occupation, western Ecuador is now inhabited by a Spanish-speaking population of mixed Indian, Negro, and white ancestry, known as montuvios. The *Cayapa* and *Colorado* have precariously managed to hang on to their jungle homes. Speaking closely related if mutually unintelligible languages of the *Barbacoan* division of the *Chibchan* family, they represent the southernmost extension of that major division. Comparative studies with other *Chibchan*-speaking groups in Highland and eastern Colombia, with *Quechua*-speaking Indians in Highland Ecuador, and with various Montaña groups should prove of considerable culture-historical interest.

THE CAYAPA

The *Cayapa* are a riverain people inhabiting the lowlands of northwestern Ecuador. Sprinkled through the jungles of Esmeraldas Province, an area of difficult colonization and control, they managed for centuries to avoid the enslavement suffered by their Highland neighbors or the ethnic annihilation of most Coast aborigines. Only in the past few decades have their settlements been pushed back into the hills by Spanish-speaking montuvio and Negro homesteaders. World War II requirements in balsa wood, rubber, and other tropical commodities have accelerated this process of displacement and acculturation.

The Cayapa River and its affluents, from the mouth of the Anzole to the foot of the Andes, are the main area of *Cayapa* settlement. Barrett (1925) found three concentration spots: Punta Venado, Sapayo Grande, and San Miguel, corresponding to three political, tribal divisions, which might since have shifted or amalgamated. In addition, small groups of *Cayapa*, in various degrees of acculturation, are found in the Santiago Valley and along the coast into Colombia. Estimates of their numbers vary but hover around a mean of 2,000.

The chief source and authority on the *Cayapa* remains S. A. Barrett's monograph (1925). Barrett visited them in 1908–9, long enough to bring

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
SD6 Cayapa SD6

THE CAYAPA INDIANS OF ECUADOR

By S. A. Barrett

TERRITORY

Geographical Situation

[31] [101] THE people known as the Cayapa Indians live at present almost wholly on the main and tributary streams of the Rio Cayapas, one of the large rivers of the northwestern part of the Province of Esmeraldas, Ecuador, and about ninety miles in a direct line north of the equator. Their [484] territory is within comparatively easy reach of the ocean, which almost all visit at least once a year.

There are a few, perhaps an aggregate of one hundred individuals, who live in several other localities, namely, on the adjacent Rio Santiago, at Pueblo Viejo, and at points along the immediate coast from the Rio Dabele, a few miles south of the town of Esmeraldas, the capital of the province, northward to the Rio Rosario, about eight miles southeast of Tumaco, in the extreme southern- [161] western part of Colombia. However, practically all the Cayapa, approximating fifteen hundred to two thousand individuals, now live on or in the immediate vicinity of the river which bears their name.

133 The Rio Cayapas heads in the western slope of the coast range of the Andes at a point not far from Mt Cotacachi, which attains an altitude of 16,290 feet (4,966 meters). The western slope of this sierra is

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
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this section is a form of malarial fever locally called paludismo; but this malady is so mild in comparison with the diseases above mentioned as to be almost negligible in a comparative consideration of the general health conditions of the region. The attacks of paludismo on newcomers are often severe, and now and then result fatally, but a native or an old resident of the region is usually fairly immune from it.

It is said that typhoid is entirely unknown; indeed no signs of it were observed during the author's stay in the region. Dysentery, which is such a serious malady in certain parts of the tropics, is little known here, though sporadic cases occur; in fact, two cases came under the author's observation, but only one of these was fatal, and this largely by reason of a complication of conditions combined with inadequate care.

It may be said, therefore, that the region inhabited by the Cayapa, and in fact the whole Province of Esmeraldas, is very healthful in comparison with other parts of the tropics.

Surrounding Peoples

The only people at present known to have close linguistic affinity with the Cayapa are the Colorados of the upper course of the Rio Esmeraldas. Dr D. G. Brinton[16] places the Cayapa in what he terms the Barbacoas linguistic stock, taking that name from a people formerly living on the upper Rio Patia in south-

[16] Brinton, The American Race, pp. 196–199, New York, 1891.

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
SD6 Cayapa SD6

ern Colombia. Brinton's limits of this linguistic stock are not very clearly defined, but are given roughly as extending from the headwaters of the Rio Daule, which empties into the Gulf of Guayaquil, northward to the vicinity of the Rio Patia, which empties into the ocean north of Tumaco in southern Colombia, thus extending from about one degree south to two and one-half degrees north latitude. The information at Brinton's disposal did not enable him to locate exactly the various peoples which he includes in this stock, but he names the Barbacoas, Cayapas, Colorados or Sacchas, Cuaiqueros, Iscuandes, Manitis, and Telembis. It is not at all unlikely that the peoples whom Brinton calls Barbacoas, Iscuandes, Telembis, and perhaps also the Cuaiqueros, are in reality only small bands of Cayapa who had gone into the localities which still bear these several names, and that the vocabularies and other information on which he based the classification were collected from them at these places, with the result that these people came into literature as four distinct divisions.[1] The same thing has happened in many instances in North America,

[1] It is highly probable that the meager vocabularies on which Brinton based his classification of these several supposedly distinct groups of people under the one family name were recorded by various systems of orthography, used by travelers whose mother tongues were different, and who in most, if not all, cases were not trained in the study of aboriginal languages. This would be sufficient to account for the considerable differences in the vocabularies—differences which, in the absence of further data, would warrant anyone in considering the various peoples as dialectically distinct one from another.

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
SD6 Cayapa SD6

hence it is now being found that a people speaking a single language appears in literature under several different names. As already pointed out, a few of the Cayapa at the present time are scattered along the coast from a point north of Tumaco to some distance south of Esmeraldas. These small bands near the coast are far more accessible to travelers and naturally would be encountered first by them. Hence it could very easily have happened that the several different peoples reported to Brinton, probably by as many different travelers, as separate groups, but whose languages proved to be closely related, were simply these bands of Cayapa who were then, as they are now, living apart from the main body along the Rio Cayapas. Furthermore, if the above assumption is true, it is probable that these Cayapa of the coast then recognized, as they do now, their identity with the main body of the people.

[103] The fact that almost all the rivers, and especially all the smaler streams, as well as other physiographical features of the whole region, mentioned by Brinton, still bear names that are of Cayapa origin, is strong evidence that the Cayapa at a comparatively early date had spread over this large area and that they were familiar with and probably in possession of, so far as other Indians were concerned, the territory from a point some distance north of Tumaco southward. It therefore seems very probable that what appeared to Brinton as several linguistically related groups are in reality parts of a single group, and that formerly, as now, the only other people so far reported who have any

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
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close linguistic affinity with the Cayapa were the Colorados.

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The dialect of the Colorados, however, is so different from that of the Cayapa as to be almost unintelligible to the latter. Their customs, dress, and general culture are also quite distinct, and their territory is of a very different character from that of the Cayapa, being decidedly mountainous, though not far enough inland to be at a great altitude. There is no political or social affinity between the two peoples; in fact, although belonging to the same linguistic stock, the only knowledge one has of the other is that gained from an occasional visit by two or three Cayapa to the Colorado country, or vice versa. It is told as one of the important events of recent times that in returning, several years ago, from a visit to Quito, the chief of the Punta Venado division of the Cayapa came by way of the Colorado country and spent several days there, and that he finally brought home with him a member of that tribe who visited on the Rio Cayapas for some days before returning to his own people.

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That the Cayapa have wider linguistic affiliations has been recently shown by Drs Beuchat and Rivet,[12] who set forth the fact that there is considerable affinity between the Barbacoas, of which the Cayapa is a dialect, and the Coconuco and Paniquita groups, both of which are in Colombia. The interrelations of the latter two

[12] Affinités des Langues du Sud de la Colombie et du Nord de l'Équateur (Groupes Paniquita, Coconuco et Barbacoa), par H. Beuchat et P. Rivet, extrait du *Muséon*, Louvain, 1910.

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
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groups are much closer than are those of either with the Barbacoa, but there seem to be a sufficient number of features in common between these two Colombian stocks on the one hand, and the Cayapa and Colorado dialects on the other, to warrant the inclusion of all these in a larger group or linguistic family.

On the north the nearest Indian neighbors of the Cayapa are those commonly called by the ambiguous term "Cholos," and who live along the Rio Saija, a small stream which empties into the ocean at about 2° 50′ N., at a point nearly opposite the island of Gorgona. These people are entirely different from the Cayapa in language and culture; but there is a certain amount of intermingling between the two, and a marked influence is exerted by the Cholos on some features of Cayapa culture, especially medicine practices.

The only other Indian neighbors of the Cayapa are the Quichua, or Kechua, descendants of the historic Inca peoples, who live in the interior valleys, the nearest being those about Ibarra and Cotacachi. Although they are of an entirely different linguistic stock, there is here also a certain amount of intermingling, small parties of Quichua making occasional trips down to the coast, and small parties of Cayapa making occasional trips into the mountains. At the present time, however, the trails are much neglected and are extremely difficult to travel, so that the intercourse is very slight.

The only other peoples with whom the Cayapa come into contact are the few European or North American whites, and the many negroes, descendants of former

4 Altschuler E-5 (1959-1960) 1965
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[7 1]

CHAPTER I

THE CAYAPA, THEIR TERRITORY AND ECONOMY

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The Pacific lowlands of the province of Darien in southeastern Panama; Colombia; and the northern part of the province of Esmeraldas Ecuador, may be thought of as a geographical and cultural unit.

> If the area has any physical unity, it is to be found in the hot, humid climate and the vegetation cover of dense tropical rain forest. . . . The Area's position between 1° and 8° north of the equator gives it high year round temperatures and contributes to an almost continuous relative humidity above 90 per cent . . . Culturally the area is one chiefly because of its predominant Negroid population; because of a common way of life based mainly on subsistence agriculture, fishing, and primitive mining . . . Today nearly 80 per cent of the scant population of the lowlands is Negroid, with a large proportion of unmixed African blood. This area, then, may be considered one of the major Negroid areas of Latin America . . . The few Whites and Mestizos of the area are found mainly in the larger trading towns, mining camps, and seaports (West 1957:1).

At the southern limits of the Pacific lowland area, in Ecuador, live the Cayapa Indians. Their lives and culture center about the Río Cayapas and its tributaries. At its lower reaches, the river forms a right

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[131]

[P 4.]

PREFACE

The field work among the Cayapa Indians of Esmeraldas province in Western Ecuador upon which this thesis is based, was carried out from August 19, 1959 to October 25, 1960. The field research was financed by a Doherty Foundation Fellowship and a research grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health, United States Public Health Service.

The main focus of the research was in the area of social control through law and government. A dimension of great significance for the study was supplied by the functional realist approach to law propounded both in text and the lecture-room by Professor E. Adamson Hoebel. Professor Hoebel made it very clear that Law is a living operation, and the product of living beings whose personalities have been shaped by a living culture. Working through the matrix of culture and personality, Law has in some societies reached heights of human magnificence and orderly elegance, and perhaps as often, in some of the ethnographic backwaters,

foothills of the Andes are resthut. Thus, for example, Puerto Nevado, which is approximately 40 kilometers from the mouth of the river, has an elevation of 12 meters as compared to Valandí, approximately 77.0 kilometers from the river's mouth, which has an elevation of 22 meters (Wolf 1879:38). The volume of the waters carried by the rivers varies considerably. Depending upon the amount of rainfall, I have seen a rise and fall in the level of the Río Canaveral of well over twenty feet within five hours. The rivers of this system cut through heavy clay soil, and the banks are not part of a flood plain but immediately form part of the hilly interior that is characteristic of the hinterland. The soil is predominantly a heavy saturated clay that is mostly reddish brown in color.

Language. The Cayapa and the Colorado Indians who live in the tropical highlands about seventy miles down the western slopes of the Andes from Quito share the distinction of being the last two aboriginal groups in western Ecuador. Their languages, although not mutually intelligible, are closely related. Recently, B. Moore worked out some phonetic correspondences between

4 Altschuler E-5 (1959-1960) 1965
SD4 Cayapa SD4

Cayapa and Colorado and thereby systematically proved the relationship that had always been assumed on purely impressionist grounds (Moore 1962). The most recent classification proposed by Greenberg places Cayapa-Colorado within the sub family called Paezan, which together with Chibchan proper belongs to the Macro-Chibchan family (Greenberg 1956). This classification is similar to that proposed by Mason (Mason 1950:180). A claim that Cayapa is closely related to Mayan is proposed by Professor Aquiles R. Perez T; however, the documentation is not convincing at present (Perez 1960: 491-494).

History. The first actually reliable information on the Cayapa comes from the pen of W. B. Stevenson, who visited them briefly in 1809. At that time, there was but one group of Cayapa (those who lived in the vicinity of Punta Venado). The chief, or alcalde, as Stevenson called him, carried a "baston, insignia of authority" which he presented to Stevenson. He then ordered the Indians to obey Stevenson ". . . and they advanced one after another to kiss the head of the baston, and accompanied me to the house of the alcalde, which was

Santiago drainage system. The dissident group claimed that the Saints were stronger in the old area and would be of greater help to the Cayapa. The new group settled in Sapalbito, where they have their own ceremonial center, but for reasons unknown they did not return to Pueblo Viejo. Factionalism apparently accounts for some of the tribal fission.

Settlement Patterns. In 1879 the banks of the Río Cayapas almost as far down as Borbon, a town at the confluence of the Río Santiago and the Río Cayapas, were inhabited by Cayapa Indians while Negroes were found mainly along the Río Santiago (Wolf 1879). By 1894 Borbon had become a Negro town, and the lower reaches of Cayapa settlement had retreated up stream toward the area of the Río Onzole. At this time, about twenty-three Negroes were reported by Reseros to be living at Telembí, a "village" of three houses about 77.3 kilometers from the mouth of the Río Cayapas. The Negroes had been given special permission by the Cayapa to live there provided they did not pan for gold which was found occasionally. (Reseros 1894). In 1960 Telembí was a thriving Negro village of several hundred people, and the greater part

G.Altschuler E-6 (1909-1944) 1968
804 Cayuga 804

of the population of the Rio Cayuga up to Bagalie Grande was Negro. Isolated Negro enclaves are found today as far up as San Miguel. Negroes tend to live in village settlements, some of which are of patrimonial and/or economic importance, while the Cayuga live scattered along the river banks. The town of San José, which lies a few miles below the Río Cayuguna, is the administrative center for the area. San Antonio, which is located a few miles above Punta Verde, is of considerable commercial importance as it is readily accessible to the small coastal vessels engaged in the banana trade.

The most characteristic feature of the area is its riverine quality, and settlement and economy centers on the rivers for both Indians and Negroes. The large hilly land areas between the rivers are completely unexploited, and the dense jungle growth makes them crossed exceedingly difficult. Except for short hunting trips or to secure trees for the making of canoes, the jungle or monte is avoided. The river, on the other hand, is open and free. The river scene is quite a quiet one. People going down stream maneuver their canoes into mid-channel, taking full advantage

Kinship by marriage and, also, for one or another reason, seek to intensify a weak relationship. The important relationship is between the <u>neophyte</u> and son between the spouse and the child.

<u>Baptism</u>. Every infant must be baptized as soon as possible by the priest. The god-parents choose the Christian name you always follow. Although some say that it is best to choose them from within the family, others state that it is best to choose non-relatives. There are the strong feelings one way or another; most of my personal interview a bias in favor of having relatives as <u>neophyte</u> of the baptism. A sacramental treatment is not possible as my data cannot primarily on the <u>Old Catholics</u> region and not on the <u>Roman Catholic</u> group as a whole.

For the baptism, the parents, the god-parents, and the infant go to <u>church</u>. The ceremony which is done in the Catholic manner by the priest; metal has <u>holy</u> which is said by the father of the child. The priest is usually presented with a gift, such as a fan or a basket, made by the Cayuga. At this time no presents are exchanged between the <u>neophyte</u>, although